

Belli Sees in Verdict A 'Little Bit of Russia'

By James Mangan

DALLAS, March 14 (AP) — Defense attorney Melvin Belli was furious when the death penalty was assessed against Jack Ruby today. He said angrily he would stop practicing law if he didn't get the verdict reversed.

About the tumult of the courtroom, he shouted:

"This was a kangaroo railroad. I hope the people of Dallas are proud of this jury that was rammed down our throats. This is the most shocking thing I have seen in my lifetime.

"Do you believe this is part of the United States? We have seen a little bit of Russia here."

Claims 30 Key Errors

He said there were 30 reversible errors committed during the trial, and that he intended to appeal without delay.

Belli was especially angered at the city of Dallas.

Gesturing strongly, he shouted:

"This is one of the sore spots in America. The festering sore that is Dallas is now the most shocking place in the Nation. If this venom spreads, then God help us all."

Belli charged the state with wanting a verdict regardless of due process of the law.

He said presiding Judge Joe B. Brown "went down the line" with the prosecution.

Belli said Judge Brown failed to take action even when informed that one of the jurors had been overheard before the trial saying he would give Ruby the death penalty if he were chosen as a juror.

Belli, normally carefully and nattily dressed, appeared in court for the verdict wearing a black polo shirt under a black sport coat.

Joe Tonahill, the No. 2 defense attorney, looked somber after hearing the verdict.

"It is a violent miscarriage of justice," he said.

Testimony Ineffective

Belli was especially bitter that the psychiatric testimony presented by the defense had not been effective.

"They disregarded every bit of the psychiatric testimony," he told newsmen angrily.

He also was disturbed by the late court session, that lasted until 1:05 a.m. today.

"Even in the heart of darkest Africa you would not argue a man's life at midnight," he said, adding that fatigue had prevented him from making an adequate closing argument.

He heaped scorn on the jurors for the short period of deliberation, and contended that they had made up their minds before they started.

"Two hours on a case like this!" he exclaimed. "What kind of a city do you think this is? This is a blight on Dallas that will make this place a city of shame forever."

Before the verdict was announced, Belli said that there was no chance of getting a fair decision.

An acquittal, he said, would show that the jury had been forced to bend over backwards against pressure to reach an honest verdict.

Conviction, he said, would show the jurors followed what he called the dictates of the business rulers of Dallas.

When the decision came in, he called it a "victory for bigotry."